

MY LOCAL CANAL

OUR NATIONAL TREASURE

Waterway Adoption Handbook



**British
Waterways**

Looking after your canals & rivers

Adopt a waterway at waterscape.com/adoptions

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Waterway Adoption



Preface by Robin Evans

Britain's waterways are a national treasure. They are unique and accessible places for everyone to enjoy and they delight, entertain and educate. Waterways belong to everyone and everyone should be interested and involved in their future.

Adoption is an act of accepting, approving, caring, to 'take up and make one's own'. This is how we see the canal adoption scheme. It's a great opportunity for local people and communities to come together to help secure the future of an important part of our nation's heritage.

You could help maintain a local towpath, fundraise, run educational events, help out with painting, lead a walking tour, help combat anti-social behaviour, be involved in planning for the future – the possibilities are endless. At the same time you can bond with your neighbours or colleagues – sharing goals and success, and have some fun.

I do hope you will consider getting involved and thank- you in advance for your enthusiasm and commitment.

Happy adopting!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Robin Evans'.

Robin Evans
Chief Executive

Introduction

Welcome to British Waterways. We look after some of the country's finest natural and built heritage but we cannot do this alone and we are fortunate to benefit from the time, enthusiasm and skills of an ever growing number of volunteers.

This enormous volunteering strength reflects people's desire to make a difference to their community and British Waterways wants to work with more local community groups and businesses to adopt their local canal or river under the **Local Waterway Adoption Schemes**.

A British Waterways Adoption involves a corporate or community group committing to volunteer activities along a stretch of canal or river adjacent to their premises for a minimum period of 12 months. The stretch will normally be between one and two miles in distance.

Adoption volunteering can take a variety of forms, from recording and improving wildlife habitats to painting and maintenance, not to mention promoting the waterway and running events and guided walks. Adoptions increase local ownership and give communities a say in their waterway.

This handbook has been produced as a guide to adopting your local waterway and includes sections on why and how to adopt, some information about delivery and supervision plus a case study of a successful adoption.

We at British Waterways are committed to making our adopters' time with us valuable, enjoyable and productive, giving them the opportunity to meet new people, see new places, learn new skills and above all help look after Britain's historic canals and rivers for future generations to explore and enjoy.



Waterway Adoption

Why adopt your waterway?

- it's fun
- it can transform the local area, providing a space to get away from it all
- and it helps conserve an important part of Britain's culture, heritage and wildlife

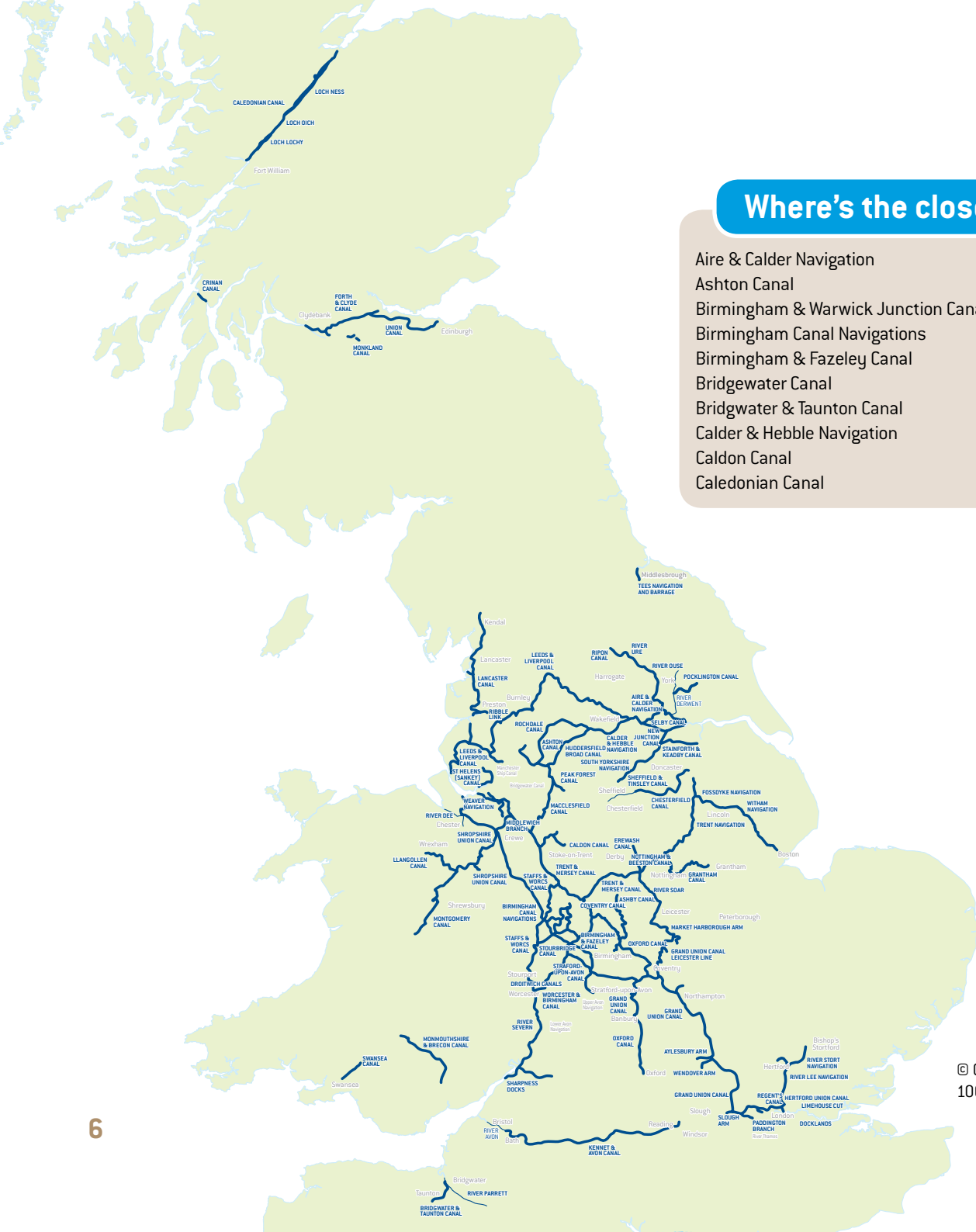
There is an enormous strength in people's desire to make a difference to their community and we hope that you can make the most of this by adopting a section of your local canal or river.

Adopting a section of canal or river can mean doing different things. For example, recording and improving wildlife habitats, taking part in practical work parties, promoting the waterway to other local people and running events and guided walks.

Adoptions increase local ownership, improving them for people and giving communities a say in their waterway.

50% of the population live within five miles of one of British Waterways' canals or rivers. They're on the doorstep. Adoptions are an opportunity to have an active hand in their management, making them work more for the local community and using them to develop skills and focal points for local people.





Where's the closest one to you?

Aire & Calder Navigation
Ashton Canal
Birmingham & Warwick Junction Canal
Birmingham Canal Navigations
Birmingham & Fazeley Canal
Bridgewater Canal
Bridgwater & Taunton Canal
Calder & Hebble Navigation
Caldon Canal
Caledonian Canal

Chesterfield Canal
Coventry Canal
Crinan Canal
Droitwich Canal
Erewash Canal
Forth & Clyde Canal
Fosdyke Navigation
Gloucester & Sharpness Canal
Grand Union Canal
Grantham Canal
Hertford Union Canal
Huddersfield Broad Canal
Huddersfield Narrow Canal
Kennet & Avon Canal
Lancaster Canal
Lee Navigation
Leeds & Liverpool Canal
Llangollen Canal
Macclesfield Canal
Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal
Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal
Montgomery Canal
New Junction Canal
Nottingham Canal
Oxford Canal

Peak Forest Canal
Pocklington Canal
Regent's Canal
Ribble Link
Ripon Canal
Rochdale Canal
Selby Canal
Sheffield & South Yorkshire Navigation
Shropshire Union Canal
Soar Navigation
Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal
Stainforth & Keadby Canal
Stort Navigation
Stourbridge Canal
Stratford-upon-Avon Canal
Trent & Mersey Canal
Trent Navigation
Union Canal
Warwick & Birmingham Canal
Wednesbury Old Canal
Weaver Navigation
Worcester & Birmingham Canal

A detailed map is available at www.waterscape.com/waterwaymap

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Waterway Adoption

A Short History of Britain's Waterways

Boom to Decline

The history of Britain as an industrial power is inextricably linked to the development of our canals or rivers at the time of the industrial revolution a new system of transport was required and made possible, replacing the pack-horse. A great canal building age began that was to result in a network of canal and improved river navigations the motorways of their day.

But 'railway mania' came to replace the 'canal mania' years, freight dwindled, canals fell into disuse, boats and locks were left to rot, structures suffered neglect and started to crumble.

By World War II, freight carrying on all but a few waterways was ending, pleasure boating on canals was almost unheard of, few visited and, except for a small core of canal people, nobody cared.

Regeneration

The work of enlightened enthusiasts was central in saving and restoring many miles of the waterway network we enjoy today, and in 1962 the British Waterways was created to look after inland waterways network.

British Waterways developed their leisure potential, and as a result, by the early 1980s, over 20,000 pleasure boats cruised the canals.

Through the 1980s and 90s British Waterways used innovative ways to earn additional income to support the waterways, including 400-mile fibre optic cable network beneath the towpaths.

By the 2000s, waterway restoration schemes championed by the voluntary sector had picked up pace as funding and community support was achieved. Major lottery grants enabled the biggest expansion in the network in 150 years resulting in 200 miles of new and restored waterways.

At one point the network was expanding at a faster rate than at the height of the Industrial Revolution with more boats on the waterways than during their carrying heydays.

The Way Forward

In 2009, British Waterways announced plans to take its canals and rivers out of state control to become a 'national trust' for the waterways. The proposals would give the people who live beside and use the waterways a much greater role in their governance. This we see as the future of our nation's canals and rivers.



Who can adopt?

Adoptions are essentially undertaken by local groups (*who can join together*), including:

- special interest groups such as the scouts, environment societies and waterway interest organisations
- parish councils
- residential associations
- local businesses
- schools

If you are an individual who is interested in getting more involved in your local canal and wanting to make things happen you could either:

- talk to us about British Waterways' volunteer opportunities in the area, there could easily be something which interests you
- enthuse your local parish council, residents association etc. to see if they'd like to adopt the local canal

Main principles for adoptions are:

- British Waterways Adoption schemes normally run for an initial period of time (*minimum of 12 months*) with the potential to continue onwards
- a prerequisite of becoming an adopter is that the organisation or group has close proximity (*preferably neighbouring but within five miles*) to the stretch of waterway
- adoption schemes are about local communities having a real impact on a section of waterway and vice versa. Therefore they need to cover approximately a one mile length of waterway.



Waterway Adoption

Case study: HFC Bank environment group canal project



HFC Bank PLC has an environment group who were looking for a community project near to their office in the centre of Birmingham and they felt that the adjacent canal was a perfect place for them to assist the community and clean up the area. They contacted British Waterways with a view to providing resources and volunteers for a year-long campaign to continue to keep the canal side and towpath clear.

Location

HFC Bank and British Waterways settled upon a stretch of the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal from the Saturday Bridge to the Farmer's Lock Bridge in the Snow Hill area of Birmingham as suitable for adoption. It is important that the scope and breadth of an adoption is clearly defined early on to allow for good use of resources and agree on outputs.

Activities

At the start of the adoption the type of activities were defined. These can vary from waterway maintenance tasks such as towpath clearing, lock painting, graffiti removal and general cleaning to organising group events and marketing activities: guided walks, making links to local schools, promoting the canal in the surrounding community etc. This is by no means a complete list.

HFC Bank performed an initial review of their stretch and decided to concentrate initially on removing graffiti, painting locks and bridges, removing weeds and installing benches. Steve Bicknell, British Waterways volunteers' coordinator, gave a presentation to over 200 HFC employees, showing the importance of their help and what they could gain from it. This also gave the opportunities to show how their section of canal related to the other canals in Birmingham and the 2,200 mile network around the country.

Making a difference

HFC Bank set up a 'warden system' whereby volunteers regularly walk their waterway stretch to ensure it remains clean and tidy, spot tasks that need doing and is not attracting unruly elements who like to update the graffiti for example.

Spread over 12 months, more than 170 HFC employees each spent a couple of days on the canal, painting, working together, cleaning graffiti, talking to passers by, planning works and promoting the waterway.

A stretch of canal in the city centre is now receiving the level of care and maintenance British Waterways has long wanted to give it but couldn't afford to. Together HFC Bank and British Waterways have transformed the canal and local community love it!



Volunteer testimonials

"It's been brilliant, I can't wait until it's my turn to come again!"

Joanne Bennett

"It's really satisfying when members of the public stop and say what a good job we're doing."

Denise Walker



Adoptions: delivery and supervision

We will plan together to make the adoption a success. Here are some topics we need to consider:

a) Understand the potential adopted stretch of waterway

We will do a joint survey so we understand the make-up and history of the adopted stretch:

- how near is the stretch of waterway to the adopter and how long is it? (*a mile is normally a good distance to work on*)
- is the area a wildlife protected area?
- are there any listed buildings or conservation areas?
- are there any major engineering works planned for the area?
- are there data cables or utility pipes in the towpath?
- are there any existing relationships along the stretch, eg. angling clubs, leased or licensed property, waterway societies, other volunteer groups etc.

This will sometimes involve our operational teams as well as heritage, environment, education, ecology and marketing experts.

b) Plan the potential activities

This where we will get together to think about the sort of tasks, activities and events you want to do on your adopted stretch.

This will involve things like:

- why the adopter wants to volunteer and what they want to achieve
- the adopter's availability and capacity for volunteering – skills, interests, time available etc
- a list of things that British Waterways feels if completed would really benefit the chosen stretch and the local community
- put together an Action Plan

c) To supervise, or not to supervise, that is

British Waterways is dedicated to a safe and enjoyable experience for all those volunteering so when an adoption begins we'll make a supervisor available. However, with time, a self-supervised model is a good option, once it's been assessed and both British Waterways and the adopter are happy to go along this route.

d) Contacts and communication

Together we'll set out the best way for us to keep in contact and:

- nominate a key contact from British Waterways and the adopter
- hold a monthly review meeting
- have a quarterly celebration event
- share the outcomes of the work

e) Recognition and publicity

Let's shout about the great value of the collaboration to the local community using:

- local press and radio stories
- plaques and badging
- joint events
- launches, for instance of renewed or different activities
- success stories
- feedback from the local community
- putting stories on British Waterways' and the adopter's websites
- blogging and tweeting about our work

Waterway Adoption

Adoptions agreement

Adopting a waterway is a two-way process. This agreement contains mutual hopes and expectations to make sure that the adopter is able to help the work of British Waterways and that British Waterways is able to help the adopter put something back into their local community and feel valued and supported in doing so.



British Waterways will:

1. Explain aims and objectives and how adoptions benefits the local waterway
2. Agree activities and to provide relevant support, training and supervision
3. Treats the adopter with respect and courtesy
4. Ensuring clear lines of communication with their British Waterways' supervisor. This is so the adopter is happy with how the tasks are organised and to allow British Waterways to provide feedback
5. Try to resolve fairly any problems, complaints and difficulties that may arise whilst adopting
6. Have an open mind to the ideas and plans of the adopters
7. Provide a safe working environment and to inform adopters of health and safety requirements and guidance
8. Inform adopters of any known hazards connected with their volunteering activities with their volunteering activities

The Adopter will:

1. Support BW's aims and objectives
2. Celebrate their waterway in their community
3. Give as much warning as possible whenever if they feel unable to do what they plan to
4. Talk to the appropriate person if they have any problems with the adoption
5. Follow British Waterways' rules, procedures and legislative practice, including health and safety, equal opportunities, environment, heritage and confidentiality
6. Have due regard for their own safety and the safety of others
7. Follow any reasonable instructions given by British Waterways' staff who have been placed in charge of a particular activity.
8. Work as a team with British Waterways' employees other local volunteers groups where appropriate

This agreement is binding in honour only, it is not intended to be a legally binding contract and may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party. There is no intention to create any form of employment or contractual relationship between the adopter and British Waterways.

To find out more about your **Local Waterway Adoption Scheme** or any other general volunteering enquiries, please contact: volunteer@britishwaterways.co.uk
If you are interested in becoming a British Waterways waterway adopter, please contact :

Bob Bradley

British Waterways Adoption Inspirer

Tel: 07739 659795

bob.bradley@britishwaterways.co.uk

www.waterscape.com/adoptions

Or contact our **National Volunteering Team** to speak to your local volunteer coordinator

British Waterways Volunteering Team

Canal Lane

Hatton

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